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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EAID](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN COMMENTS ON STRATEGIC DIALOGUE PLANNING

CLASSIFIED BY ECPO COUNSELOR CATHERINE HILL-HERNDON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: During the meeting between A/S Welch and Elliott Abrams and Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, arrangements for the upcoming July 18 Strategic Dialogue were discussed. Aboul Gheit expressed his preference for a press event at the start of the meeting to a press conference at the end, agreed with A/S Welch that working groups could be held at a later date, and said that he would include Egyptian Ambassador Maged Abdulaziz at the lunch if Ambassador Bolton planned to attend. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) (C) SECRETARY'S MEETINGS/LUNCH: In his July 12 meeting with visiting A/S Welch and Elliott Abrams, Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit said that the GOE has agreed internally on a principals' (6 6) meeting starting at 12:30. The Egyptian side will include FonMin Aboul Gheit, EGIS Director Omar Soliman, Minister of Trade Rachid, Minister of International Cooperation Abulnaga, and Egyptian Ambassador Fahmy. Discussion will last 30 minutes. An expanded group (10 10) will continue the discussion over lunch. Aboul Gheit said he did not want to see the lunch break down into smaller, bilateral discussions but that he wanted it to continue as one general discussion. This, he said, will give a total of 90 minutes to cover any topic of interest. "Everything is on the table." He suggested that the GOE would like to focus on issues that will deepen US-Egyptian understanding, including regional issues, the "US image" and how to help the US "be more convincing." After the lunch, the GOE envisages a short plenary session with an exchange of statements.

[13.](#) (C) PRESS: Aboul Gheit emphasized the importance of press coverage to the overall message, but told A/S Welch that he prefers a controlled press event at the start of the discussion to an open press conference afterwards. He agreed to a scenario whereby the press would be escorted into the meeting room at the start, listen a short statement from both Secretary Rice and himself, and then be escorted out, under a

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"no questions" agreement with the press. Aboul Gheit said he would not read a statement, but would speak without notes at this point.

[14.](#) (C) WORKING GROUPS: According to Aboul Gheit, the GOE is interested in meeting at the working level in the categories of economics and trade, political, and security, "when both sides agree that it is needed." He reported that the Egyptian military does not want to establish a military/defense committee as they believe that it would duplicate existing arrangements. It is our understanding, therefore, that there will be no working group meetings next week. The first one will be to discuss AID's program reforms in Cairo the week of July 24. A/S Welch said that the Egyptian approach would work but cautioned that on the mil-mil side, although the existing group does meet periodically, it may not get the political attention it deserves. He underlined that the US would prefer to see it "more part of the structure than out of it."

[15.](#) (C) PARTICIPANTS: Aboul Gheit underlined that he expected the participation on both sides would be high level. A/S Welch noted that the core people on the US side would not correspond precisely to the Egyptian delegation but that it would be appropriate. He indicated that AID Administrator Randall Tobias would participate, and that Ambassador Bolton had been invited, probably to join at the lunch. Aboul Gheit responded that he would therefore invite Egyptian Ambassador to the UN Maged Abdulaziz as well.

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